

# MOROCCO 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution states the King holds the title “Commander of the Faithful” and that he is the protector of Islam and the guarantor of the freedom to practice religious affairs in the country. It prohibits political parties founded on religion, as well as political parties, parliamentarians, and constitutional amendments that denigrate or infringe on Islam. The law penalizes the use of enticements to convert a Muslim to another religion and prohibits criticism of Islam. The government claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area it controls by the same constitution, laws, and structures as elsewhere in the country, including laws that deal with religious freedom. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), an organization seeking the territory’s independence, disputes this claim to sovereignty over the territory. In May, authorities arrested movie actor Rafik Boubker for making “blasphemous remarks against Islam and attacking the sacredness of worship” in a social media posting. After the government ordered the closure of mosques in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Salafists objected to the closures as an assault on faith. After Salafist leader Abou Naim criticized the government’s decision in a March 16 Facebook post, authorities arrested him the next day and indicted him for incitement and compromising public order. On April 3, the Rabat Court of Appeal sentenced Naim to one year in prison and a fine of 2,000 dirhams (\$220). In February, the Justice and Charity Organization (JCO), a Sunni Islamist social movement that rejects the King’s spiritual authority, protested in Rabat and Tangier a decision made in 2019 to close unlicensed mosques in Casablanca, Kenitra, and Inezgane, which were operating in the homes of JCO members. On February 20, Agadir University expelled three students affiliated with JCO on charges of “insulting public officials and defamation of things intended for public benefit.” Although the law allows registration of religious groups as associations, some minority religious groups reported the government rejected their registration requests. The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MEIA) continued to guide and monitor the content of sermons in mosques, Islamic religious education, and the dissemination of Islamic religious material by broadcast media, actions it said were intended to combat violent extremism. The government restricted the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials, as well as Islamic materials it deemed inconsistent with the Maliki-Ashari school of Sunni Islam. In January, the King inaugurated Bayt Dakira, a Jewish cultural museum in Essaouira.

On April 1, police in Casablanca arrested a man for hate speech for social media posts accusing a Jewish citizen and a foreign national of being directly responsible for the infection of a large number of persons with COVID-19. Representatives of minority religious groups said fear of societal harassment, including ostracism by converts' families, social ridicule, employment discrimination, and potential violence against them by "extremists," were the main reasons leading them to practice their faiths discreetly. Foreign clergy discouraged some Christian citizens from attending services for fear of societal harassment. A member of the local Christian community stated that Christian services were held in secret house churches to avoid such harassment. According to the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) annual report for 2018-19, there was continued societal harassment of Shia and Shiism in the press and in Friday sermons. Christian and Jewish representatives stated that they had seen a positive change in regard to societal tolerance, which they attributed to the 2019 visit of Pope Francis and statements at that time by the King. Representatives of Christian minority groups in the Western Sahara said fear of societal harassment, including ostracism by converts' families and social ridicule, was the main reason leading them to practice their faith discreetly.

The Charge d'Affaires and other U.S. embassy and consulate general officials met with government officials, including from the Ministry of Interior and the MEIA, to promote religious freedom and tolerance, including the rights of minority communities. In regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country, embassy and consulate general representatives highlighted the importance of protection of religious minorities and interfaith dialogue.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 35.6 million (midyear 2020 estimate). More than 99 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim, and less than 0.1 percent of the population is Shia Muslim. Groups together constituting less than 1 percent of the population include Christians, Jews, and Baha'is.

According to Jewish community leaders, there are an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 Jews, approximately 2,500 of whom reside in Casablanca. Some Christian community leaders estimate there are between 2,000 and 6,000 Christian citizens distributed throughout the country; however, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights estimates there are 25,000 Christian citizens.

Foreign-resident Christian leaders estimate the foreign-resident Christian population numbers at least 30,000 Roman Catholics and 10,000 Protestants, many of whom are recent migrants from sub-Saharan Africa or lifelong residents of the country whose families have resided and worked in the country for generations but do not hold citizenship. There are small foreign-resident Anglican communities in Casablanca and Tangier. There are an estimated 3,000 foreign residents who identify as Russian and Greek Orthodox, including a small foreign-resident Russian Orthodox community in Rabat and a small foreign-resident Greek Orthodox community in Casablanca. Most foreign-resident Christians live in the Casablanca, Tangier, and Rabat urban areas, but small numbers of foreign Christians are present throughout the country, including many who are migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Shia Muslim leaders estimate there are several thousand Shia citizens, with the largest proportion in the north. In addition, there are an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 foreign-resident Shia from Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, and Iraq. Leaders of the Ahmadi Muslim community estimate their numbers at 750. Leaders of the Baha'i community estimate there are 350 to 400 members throughout the country.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal Framework**

According to the constitution, the country is a Muslim state and Islam is the religion of the state. The constitution guarantees freedom of thought, expression, and assembly, and says the state guarantees every individual the freedom to practice his or her religious affairs. The constitution states the King holds the title “Commander of the Faithful” and that he is the protector of Islam and the guarantor of the freedom to practice religious affairs in the country. The constitution prohibits the enactment of laws or constitutional amendments infringing upon its provisions relating to Islam and also recognizes the Jewish community as an integral component of society. According to the constitution, political parties may not be founded on religion and may not denigrate or infringe on Islam. A political party may not legally challenge Islam as the state religion. Religions other than Islam and Judaism are not recognized by the constitution or laws.

The government claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area it controls by the same constitution, laws, and structures as elsewhere in the country, including laws that deal with religious freedom. The Popular Front for the

Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), an organization seeking the territory's independence, disputes this claim to sovereignty over the territory.

The constitution and the law governing media prohibit any individual, including members of parliament normally immune from arrest, from criticizing Islam on public platforms, such as print or online media or in public speeches. Such expressions are punishable by imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of up to 200,000 dirhams (\$22,400).

The law penalizes anyone who “employs enticements to undermine the faith” or converts a Muslim to another faith by exploiting their weakness or need for assistance or through the use of educational, health, or other institutions. It provides punishments of six months to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22 to \$56) for violations. The same penalties apply to anyone who intentionally interferes with religious rites or celebrations where this causes disturbances or affects the dignity of such religious acts. The law also provides the right to a court trial for anyone accused of such an offense. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the law. The law permits the government to expel summarily any noncitizen resident it determines to be “a threat to public order,” and the government has used this clause to expel foreigners suspected of proselytizing.

By law, impeding or preventing one or more persons from worshipping or from attending worship services of any religion is punishable by six months to three years imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22 to \$56). The penal code states any person known to be Muslim who breaks the fast in public during the month of Ramadan without an exception granted by religious authorities is liable to punishment of six months in prison and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams (\$22 to \$56). Owners have discretion to keep their restaurants open during Ramadan.

The High Authority for Audiovisual Communications established by the constitution requires all eight public television stations to dedicate 5 percent of their airtime to Islamic religious content and to broadcast the Islamic call to prayer five times daily.

Sunni Muslims and Jews are the only religious groups recognized in the constitution as native to the country. A separate set of laws and special courts govern personal status matters for Jews, including functions such as marriage, inheritance, and other personal status matters. Rabbinical authorities, who are also court officials, administer Jewish family courts. Muslim judges trained in the

country's Maliki-Ashari Sunni interpretation of sharia administer the courts for personal status matters for all other religious groups. According to the law, a Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jewish woman; a Muslim woman may not marry a man of another religion unless he converts to Islam. Non-Muslims must formally convert to Islam and be permanent residents before they can become guardians of abandoned or orphaned children. Guardianship entails the caretaking of a child, which may last until the child reaches 18, but it does not allow changing the child's name or inheritance rights, and it requires maintaining the child's birth religion, according to orphanage directors.

Legal provisions outlined in the general tax code provide tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the religious activities of recognized religious groups (Sunni Muslims and Jews) and religious groups registered as associations (some "foreign" Christian churches). The law does not require religious groups to register to worship privately, but a nonrecognized religious group must register as an association to conduct business on behalf of the group (e.g., open and hold bank accounts, rent property, acquire land and building grants, and have access to customs exemptions for imports necessary for the religious activities) or to hold public gatherings. Associations must register with local Ministry of Interior officials in the jurisdiction of the association's headquarters. An individual representative of a religious group that is neither recognized nor registered as an association may be held liable for any of the group's public gatherings, transactions, bank accounts, property rentals, or petitions to the government. The registration application must contain the name and purpose of the association; the name, nationality, age, profession, and residential address of each founder; and the address of the association's headquarters. The constitution guarantees civil society associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) the right to organize themselves and conduct their activities freely within the scope of the constitution. The law on associations prohibits organizations that pursue activities the government regards as "illegal, contrary to good morals, or aimed at undermining the Islamic religion, the integrity of the national territory, or the monarchical regime, or which call for discrimination."

Many foreign-resident Christian churches (churches run by and attended by foreign residents only) are registered as associations. The Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican Churches maintain different forms of official status. The Russian Orthodox and Anglican Churches are registered as branches of international associations through the embassies of Russia and the United Kingdom, respectively. Protestant churches and the

Catholic Church, whose existence as foreign-resident churches predates the country's independence in 1956, as well as the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, maintain a special status recognized by the government, which allows them to preserve houses of worship and assign foreign clergy.

By law, all publicly funded educational institutions must teach Sunni Islam in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Maliki-Ashari school of Islamic jurisprudence. Foreign-run and privately funded schools have the choice of including or omitting religious instruction within the school's curriculum. Private Jewish schools may teach Judaism.

According to the constitution, only the High Council of Ulema, a group headed and appointed by the King with representatives from all regions of the country, is authorized to issue fatwas, which become legally binding only through the King's endorsement in a royal decree and subsequent confirmation by parliament. Such fatwas are considered binding only on Maliki-Ashari Sunni Muslims. If the King or parliament declines to ratify a decision of the council, the decision remains nonbinding and unenforced.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **Government Practices**

In May, authorities arrested movie actor Rafik Boubker for making "blasphemous remarks against Islam and attacking the sacredness of worship." According to the Agence France Presse news agency, in a video posted to social media, Boubker appeared to insult imams, to call for making religious ablutions with "whiskey and vodka," and to praise the benefits of alcohol for "connecting with God." Boubker, who was released on bail pending a court hearing, faced a possible sentence of between six months and two years in prison and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 dirhams (\$2,200 to \$22,400). On July 14, the Ain Sebaa Court of First Instance in Casablanca postponed his trial. At year's end, the date of the trial remained unknown.

On March 16, the King ordered the High Council of Ulema to issue a fatwa mandating the immediate closure of mosques to prevent the spread of COVID-19. According to the government, the mosques were opened four months later under strict compliance with COVID-19 measures.

Some Salafists who oppose the government objected to the closures as an assault on faith. One Salafist leader, Abou Naim, called on the government to close “casinos, bars, and debauchery...instead of talking about mosques.” He also said, “The country that closes its mosques renounces its religion. Do not despise the mosque, otherwise God will punish you.” Police arrested Abou Naim on March 17, the day after he posted a video on Facebook containing his criticism. After the government indicted him for inciting hatred and violence and compromising public order, the Rabat Court of Appeal sentenced him on April 3 to one year in prison and a 2000-dirham (\$220) fine.

Authorities continued to deny Christian citizen groups freedom of worship in churches, the right to Christian or civil marriage and funeral services, and the right to establish churches (or, unlike foreign churches, to establish an association). The government denied official recognition to NGOs that it considered to be advocating against Islam as the state religion.

In February, the JCO protested in Rabat and Tangier a decision made in February 2019 to close unlicensed mosques in Casablanca, Kenitra, and Inezgane, which were operating in the homes of JCO members. According to press reports, on February 20, Agadir University expelled three students affiliated with JCO for “insulting public officials and defamation of things intended for public benefit.”

The JCO remained banned but largely tolerated, although the government continued to monitor its activities. It remained the largest social movement in the country despite being unregistered. The JCO continued to release press statements, hold conferences, manage internet sites, and participate in political demonstrations. According to media, there were instances in which the government prevented the organization from meeting and restricted public distribution of JCO publications. On June 25, the JCO announced it did not consider itself a religious minority, but rather an Islamic advocacy organization deprived of basic rights.

During the year, there were no reports of authorities prohibiting nonregistered religious groups from practicing their religion in private.

Community leaders from various Christian groups said authorities continued to make telephone or house calls to demonstrate that they continued to monitor Christian activities. According to various sources, authorities said the purpose of such monitoring was to protect minority religious communities. Authorities also informed all religious communities they would be monitoring their compliance with COVID-19 restrictions, as they did with the general population.

A number of religious groups reported occasionally informing authorities of planned large gatherings, for which authorities sometimes provided security.

According to religious leaders and legal scholars, the government's refusal to allow Shia Muslim groups to register as associations continued to prevent these groups from gathering legally for public religious observations. There were no known Shia mosques. According to Shia community members, they were able to pray in Sunni mosques, but they risked criticism from other worshippers for their religious practices. Shia representatives reported they did not attempt to register during the year because they feared security forces would harass them, as had been the case in previous years.

AMDH applied for registration in 2019 but remained unregistered. At year's end, a foreign religious association was still waiting for its organization's registration to be renewed, limiting its ability to hold meetings and raise funds.

The U.S. NGO Open Doors stated in its annual *World Watch List* report for 2020 that the penal code, which criminalizes "shaking the faith" of a Muslim, put many Christians who talked to others about their faith at risk of criminal prosecution and arrest. The NGO also stated that while the penal code provision "only punish[ed] proselytization, converts to Christianity [could] be punished in other ways, such as loss of inheritance rights and custody of their children."

Christian leaders said there were no reports of authorities pressuring converts to renounce their faith by informing friends, relatives, and employers of the individual's conversion.

The government continued to allow the operation of registered foreign-resident Christian churches. Christian citizen leaders reported that Christian citizens generally did not attend those services out of fear of incurring governmental harassment, including the opening of a file with security authorities. Some foreign-born clergy and Christian citizen leaders stated that some citizens who were well known to be Christian encountered no harassment from government security officers when they attended the services of registered foreign-resident Christian churches. Foreign residents and visitors attended religious services at those churches without restriction.

The 2017 ban on the import, production, and sale of the burqa remained in effect. The Ministry of Interior cited security concerns as justification for the ban. The



ban did not prevent individuals from wearing burqas or making them at home for individual use. Authorities continued to prohibit anchors on national television and police and army personnel in uniform from wearing a hijab or burqa.

MEIA's Mohamed VI Institute remained the principal government institution responsible for shaping the country's religious life and promoting its interpretation of Sunni Islam. It employed 2,100 *morchidines* (male Muslim spiritual guides) and 901 *morchidates* (female Muslim spiritual guides) in mosques or religious institutions throughout the country. The *morchidates* taught religious subjects and provided counsel on a variety of matters, including women's legal rights and family planning. The institute continued to provide government-required one-year training to imams, training an average of 150 *morchidines* and 100 *morchidates* a year. It also continued to train foreign imams, predominantly from sub-Saharan Africa. The training sessions fulfilled the requirement for religious leaders to acquire a certificate issued by the High Council of Ulema to operate in the country. The High Council of Ulema also continued to host continuing training sessions and capacity-building exercises for religious leaders. On July 1, the Mohamed VI Institute announced that training would continue during the COVID-19 pandemic and released a number of future *morchidine* (150) and *morchidate* (100) openings for 2021.

The government required religious leaders who worked in the country to abide by the guidelines outlined in the MEIA-issued *Guide of the Imam, Khatib, and the Preacher*. The MEIA continued to guide and monitor the content of sermons in mosques, Islamic religious education, and the dissemination of Islamic religious material by broadcast media, actions it said were intended to combat violent extremism.

On February 15, MEIA suspended the imam of an Oujda mosque because he criticized "the deal of the century," a reference to potential normalization of ties between Arab states and Israel, during the Friday sermon. In response, an expert close to the Movement for Unity and Reform, the social Islamist movement closely linked to Party of Justice and Development, criticized the MEIA for limiting the imam's freedom of speech and defended the suspended imam and his views.

The MEIA continued to monitor Quranic schools to prevent what the ministry considered inflammatory or extremist rhetoric and to ensure teaching followed approved doctrine.

The government required mosques to close to the public shortly after daily prayer times to prevent use of the premises for what it termed “unauthorized activity,” including gatherings intended to promote extremism. Construction of new mosques, including those constructed using private funds, required authorization from the MEIA.

The government continued to restrict the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials as well as some Islamic materials it deemed inconsistent with the Maliki-Ashari school of Sunni Islam.

The government’s policy remained to ban the sale of all books, videotapes, and DVDs it considered religiously extremist.

The government permitted the display and sale of Bibles in French, English, and Spanish. A limited number of Arabic translations of the Bible were available for sale in a few bookshops for use in higher education courses.

Some Amazigh (Berber)-rights activists reported intolerance and suppression of traditional Amazigh customs in rural Amazigh villages by government-appointed morchidates.

The government continued drafting and implementing an educational charter mandating traditional education be based on “values” and the “respect for religious and legal studies.” The Ministry of Education continued a review of the religion curriculum used in primary and secondary education to make reforms based on “universal values of liberty, empathy, solidarity, and honesty.” Since the review began in 2016, 29 textbooks have been rewritten, and modifications to textbooks continued during the year.

On November 19, King Mohammed VI approved a decision to teach Jewish history and culture as part of the Arabic-language curriculum in public primary schools. A joint statement from the American Sephardi Federation and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations called the decision an “enduring commitment to recognizing a pluralist past” and stated, “at the core of this effort is enhancing understanding and fostering the connection between Muslims and Jews.” MEIA in July announced plans to encourage public universities to include teachings about Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The University of al-Quaraouiyine in Fez offered courses on the history of Judaism, Hebrew culture and language, and the Old Testament. Coursework also included the history of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

Jewish and Christian citizens continued to state that elementary and high school curricula did not include mention of the historical legacy and current presence of their groups in the country. The government continued to fund the study of Jewish culture and heritage at state-run universities.

The government continued to disseminate information about Islam and Judaism over dedicated state-funded television and radio channels. Television channel Assadissa (Six) programming was strictly religious, consisting primarily of Quran and hadith (authoritative sayings and deeds ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad) readings and exegeses, highlighting the government's interpretation of Islam.

According to observers, the government tolerated social and charitable activities consistent with Sunni Islam. For example, the Unity and Reform Movement, the country's largest registered Islamic social organization, continued its close relationship with the Party of Justice and Development, the largest party in the governing coalition, and continued to operate without restriction, according to media reports.

From April to September, the Baha'is of Morocco community invited followers of its Facebook page from different faiths to pray for relief from COVID-19 and organized several online conferences.

The monarchy continued to support the restoration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries throughout the country, efforts it stated were necessary to preserve the country's religious and cultural heritage and to serve as a symbol of tolerance. According to the government and Jewish leaders, MEIA did not interfere in operations of or practices in synagogues after COVID-19 outbreaks in March that followed Purim celebrations and a wedding in Agadir.

The Prison Administration authorized religious observances and services, provided by religious leaders, for all prisoners, including religious minorities.

On March 30, the government launched an investigation into a list of members of the Jewish community that were said to have COVID-19. The list was posted on social media and contained names, contact information, and other sensitive personal information. Some sources from the Jewish community also said the list was used to refuse treatment at some private medical clinics.

On January 22, the King received Catholic Archbishop of Rabat Cristobal Lopez Romero to offer congratulations on his elevation to Cardinal. The King stated that the audience represented the values of coexistence, compassion, and understanding.

On January 16, the King visited Bayt Dakira, a museum and synagogue in a historic 19th century home that preserves the heritage of the country's Jewish community in Essaouira and in the country more broadly. The King also held a banquet in honor of members of the Jewish community present.

According to press and NGO reports, Ahmed Abbadi, the head of the government-sponsored Rabita Mohammedia of Religious Scholars, an institute that promotes tolerance, participated in a January 23 visit by a delegation of senior Islamic scholars to Auschwitz. During the visit, he stated his condemnation of the Nazis' "barbarity" and "crimes against humanity."

Ministry of Interior and MEIA authorization continued to be a requirement for the renovation or construction of churches. On June 21, St. John's Anglican Church in Casablanca, which is home to an expatriate Anglican community, hosted the grand opening of its community center, built with approval from government authorities. The church building was undergoing government-approved renovation at year's end, with an expected grand opening in 2021.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

Representatives of minority religious groups said fear of societal harassment, including ostracism by converts' families, social ridicule, employment discrimination, and potential violence against them by "extremists," were the main reasons leading them to practice their faiths discreetly. Foreign clergy discouraged some Christian citizens from attending services for fear of societal harassment. A member of the local Christian community stated that Christian services were held in secret house churches to avoid such harassment.

Christian and Jewish representatives stated that they had seen a positive change in regard to societal tolerance, which they attributed to the 2019 visit by Pope Francis and statements at that time by the King.

On April 1, police in Casablanca arrested a man for hate speech for social media posts accusing a Jewish citizen and a foreign national of being directly responsible for infecting a large number of persons with COVID-19.

According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, a U.S. NGO, a man living in Tangier posted a video to YouTube on April 28 in which he stated that Jews were not the “offspring of apes and pigs” but rather the brothers of apes and pigs, because they resembled them in “conduct and traits.”

According to Mimouna, an NGO founded by young Muslims to promote and preserve the country’s Jewish heritage, a primary school textbook in Arabic introduced during the year featured the January 2020 royal visit to Bayt Dakira, a museum and synagogue that celebrates Jewish heritage in Essaouira. The text accompanying the pictures of the visit celebrated Jewish culture and heritage as well.

According to the 2018-19 AMDH annual report, there was continued societal harassment of Shia and Shia beliefs and practices in the press and through Friday sermons. Shia reported they observed Ashura in private to avoid societal harassment. Shia Muslims said that many avoided disclosing their religious affiliation in areas where their numbers were smaller.

There were reports from media, activists, community leaders, and Christian converts that Christian citizens faced social pressure to convert to Islam or renounce their Christian faith from non-Christian family and friends. Young Christians who still lived with their Muslim families reportedly did not reveal their faith because they believed they might be expelled from their homes unless they renounced Christianity.

Representatives of Christian minority groups in the Western Sahara said fear of societal harassment, including ostracism by converts’ families and social ridicule, were the main reasons leading them to practice their faith discreetly.

Jewish citizens continued to state that they lived and attended services at synagogues in safety. They said they were able to visit religious sites regularly and to hold annual commemorations.

Baha’i leaders said they did not experience harassment during the year. Members of the Baha’i Faith said they were open about their faith with family, friends, and neighbors.

Muslim citizens continued to study at private Christian and Jewish schools, reportedly because these schools maintained a reputation for offering a good

education. According to school administrators, Muslim students continued to constitute a significant portion of the students at Jewish schools in Casablanca.

According to the Arab Youth Survey, an annual poll conducted by a consulting firm based in the United Arab Emirates, 62 percent of the country's youth reported that religion, not family, politics, language, or nationality, was the most important factor in their personal identity.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement**

The Charge d'Affaires and other embassy and consulate general officials met with government officials, including from the Ministry of Interior and the MEIA, to promote religious freedom and tolerance, including the rights of minority communities.

In regular meetings and discussions with members of religious minority and majority communities throughout the country, embassy and consulate general representatives highlighted the importance of protection of religious minorities and interfaith dialogue. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, U.S. officials were unable to meet with members of religious groups in Western Sahara.

In October, the U.S. Department of State Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs and the Ambassador visited the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca and held meetings with the president of the Jewish Moroccan Cultural Heritage Foundation.

In early October, the CEO of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and the Ambassador attended Yom Kippur services in Casablanca.